

MANAGER FORM ETC.—(Continued)

of aldermen with legislative functions only was retained, along with the board of commissioners, the duties of the latter body being executive only. Generally speaking the change from civic government directly by Mayors and Committees of Aldermen to that by a small number of directly elected commissioners produced improvement in the economic character and quality of civic administration. There was much less apparent dishonesty, less waste, more efficiency. Especially was this the case where the Board of Aldermen was abolished altogether. The small number of the commissioners placed them more fully under the eye of the public than was the former larger number of aldermen. For the same reason a higher average quality of civic manhood was put into office. In most cases also city wards were abolished so far as the election of commissioners was concerned, which to a great extent eliminated the jealousy and wire-pulling of one part of the city as against another. But whilst matters became distinctly better, the new system has not produced, in at least many cases, the improved strictly business administration expected of it. It was hardly possible that it should or could. The commissioners are selected from amongst a city's own citizens, generally because of their popularity, or well-known reputation for probity, or for general business ability, as exhibited in the conduct of their own business; but very seldom because of fitness, from experience, or expert knowledge for the work of the civic department they are expected to administer. Moreover they seldom give their whole time to the job and are paid salaries which in meagreness compare with the partial nature of the time they give to the public service.

Furthermore, each is elected or appointed the independent head of his department, under no necessary obligation to consult with the heads of other departments, sometimes for private or public reasons antagonistic to each other, owing allegiance to none but the mayor, and sometimes disputing even that. The mayor himself is but a bird of passage, seldom trained to civic administrative work, and generally possessed of a business of his own to attend to as well as the work of the city. It follows that there is not, or is seldom, any competent trained authority capable of compelling the co-ordination and co-operation of the work of one department with another, and it needs little imagination to visualize the waste and inefficiency which must accompany the separate and independent working of the different departments of the same corporate whole. It is not matter of surprise therefore that the commissioners system, as generally operated, does not produce results to satisfy the average business man who chooses to investigate the matter.

But the spirit of reform is still abroad in the land, and in many places municipal reformers, instead of despairing, asked themselves why it was that the new system did not in all respects deliver the strictly business administration which was hoped for. A little cogitation brought the obvious answer. It was because the commissioners were not trained for the work they had undertaken, because in most cases they only gave part of their time to it, and because there was not at the supreme head of things a trained expert, who was on the job all the time. Because, in fact, the municipal business was not run in the only way in which it has been found by the age-long experience of men, a commercial business can be successfully run, viz., by the agency of expert officials throughout its departments, with an expert at the head of the whole, who gives his whole time to the work. The question was asked and studied—was there any fundamental reason why the system which had been found as a rule so successful in the management of business corporations, should not be equally successful when applied in principle to the management of municipal corporations? It was clear that both of them depended for success upon the economic and efficient handling of men and materials. Were there such radical and fundamental differences in the character of the two types of corporation that totally different methods must be adopted in order to produce satisfactory results in each? The chief difference appeared to be that whereas in a commercial corporation the fountain of authority resided in a body of shareholders who looked for results in the form of profits to be paid to them in money—in a municipal corporation the fountain of authority was vested in the citizen electors, who looked for results in good government, with all that is implied in that expression, to be obtained at a minimum of taxation.

That is a very important difference of course, but the more the problem was studied the more clearly it emerged that the desired results could only be obtained by expert and trained management throughout the corporation, including an expert chief executive, in whatsoever way such management could be obtained. Therefore, the question became narrowed down to what was the best way of obtaining this expert management. Should the chief executive head be elected directly by the citizens, or should he be elected by a committee, or by the time-honored board of aldermen? Must he be elected or selected from amongst the local citizens, or should he be taken from wheresoever the most suitable men could be found? These are important questions. Turning again for guidance to the experience and parallel of the commercial corporation it was found, of course, that the expert administrative head is selected by a committee of the shareholders, the Board of Directors, and that the first consideration in their view in making the selection is, as a rule, fitness by training and experience for the position he is to fill; his place of birth and local habitation being matters of secondary consideration. It needed little demonstration to show that this method is wise. It was clear that a large body of shareholders, and still less a large body of civic electors, is not able properly to canvas the qualifications of candidates for positions requiring special and expert knowledge and experience. And, inasmuch as ability to do the work required is, and should be, the first pre-requisite in a manager it seemed very clear that his place of selection should not be confined to any particular locality. Indeed one can see advantages in bringing a civic manager from another city. He would not be so liable to be the object of local selfish influence, and would bring to the service of his new city experience gained in another. It clearly emerged therefore that where a city decided to entrust the administration of its affairs to a manager it must elect a committee of its citizens to make the selection and appointment. This pointed to the retention of the Board of Commissioners, or Board of Aldermen, and raised the question of the definition of the functions which should be retained by it and those which should be delegated to the manager. Harking back again for guidance to the experience and practice of commercial corporations it is found that the practise of Boards of Directors is to confine their activities to what may be described in general terms as principles, policy and legislation, leaving it to their General Manager to carry out in detail their resolutions. Careful study seemed to dictate that similar principles of action should govern the relations between a civic legislative body and its chief executive officer. Therefore, it was concluded that under a manager system there should be retained the City Council, or Board of Commissioners with strictly legislative functions, and the duty and responsibility of the appointment of the manager, to whom should be entrusted all practical executive functions. Managers should be entrusted also with the task of selecting subordinate heads of department and all permanent officials. This is necessary, because a manager of men cannot be expected to produce the best results unless he has full control over his assistant officials. Should he abuse in any way this right of appointment, the City Council, or Commissioners have always a remedy at hand in their right to dismiss the manager.

Well, guided and influenced by considerations such as I have tried to outline, some forty cities in the United States and one or two in Canada, of which latter the City of Westmount is one, have appointed City Managers, and entrusted the executive administration of their affairs to them with, in almost every case, the best results, as proved by increase of efficiency and reduction of expenses in practically every department of civic activities. In all cases a council or board of commissioners has been retained, elected by the people, usually a small number, and usually elected by the whole city without division, whose functions are legislative—the making of by-laws, the fixing of assessments, the control of policy, the appointment of the manager and all matters belonging to legislation and general direction, but the execution of all resolutions of council and the general administration of the affairs of the city are left to the manager. It has not been easy to find men with the necessary qualifications, for the position is a new one in America. It has been necessary to look for them in the ranks of commercial employment, and it will always be necessary to pay equal to the remuneration obtainable in commercial life for equal ability. The City of Dayton, Ohio, tried to get Col.